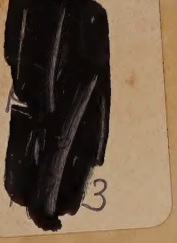

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Oliver Cromwell

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Oliver Cromwell

A Play by John Drinkwater

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TO

BERNARD SHAW,

WITH HOMAGE TO THE

MASTER DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE,

AND WITH THE GRATITUDE THAT IS HIS DUE

FROM EVERY YOUNGER WRITER FOR

THE ENGLISH THEATRE

THE CHARACTERS ARE (*in order*):

MRS. CROMWELL, *Oliver's mother.*
ELIZABETH CROMWELL, *his wife.*
BRIDGET CROMWELL, *his daughter.*
JOHN HAMPDEN.
HENRY IRETON.
OLIVER CROMWELL.
SETH TANNER.
TWO AGENTS TO THE EARL OF BEDFORD.
AMOS TANNER.
A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.
THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.
BASSETT, *an officer of the House.*
THE MAYOR OF ELY.
GENERAL FAIRFAX.
COLONEL STAINES.
COLONEL PEMBERTON.
A SCOUT.
A SURGEON.
AN AIDE.
NEAL, *Secretary to Charles.*
CHARLES I.

FARM LABOURERS.
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.

OLIVER CROMWELL

SCENE I.

CROMWELL'S *house at Ely, about the year* 1639. *An early summer evening. The window of the room opens on to a smooth lawn, used for bowling, and a garden full of flowers.*

OLIVER'S *wife,* ELIZABETH CROMWELL, *is sitting at the table, sewing. In a chair by the open window* MRS. CROMWELL, *his mother, is reading. She is about eighty years of age.*

Mrs. Cromwell: Oliver troubles me, persuading everywhere. Restless like this.

Elizabeth: He says that the time is uneasy, and that we are part of it.

Mrs. Cromwell: There's a man's house. It's enough surely.

Elizabeth: I know. But Oliver must be doing. You know how when he took the magistracy he would listen to none of us. He knows best.

Mrs. Cromwell: What time is John coming?

Elizabeth: By nightfall he said. Henry Ireton is coming with him.

Mrs. Cromwell: John Hampden is like that, too. He excites the boy.

Elizabeth: Yes, but, mother, you will do nothing with Oliver by thinking of him as a boy.

Mrs. Cromwell: Of course he's a boy.

Elizabeth: He's forty.

Mrs. Cromwell: Methuselah.

Elizabeth: What?

Mrs. Cromwell: I said Methuselah.

Elizabeth: He says John's the bravest man in England.

Mrs. Cromwell: Just because he won't pay a tax. How if everybody refused to pay taxes? If you don't have taxes, I don't see how you are to have a government. Though I can't see that it governs anybody, except those that don't need it.

Elizabeth: Oliver says it's a wrong tax, this ship money.

Mrs. Cromwell: There's always something wrong. It keeps men busy, I suppose.

Elizabeth: But it was brave of John.

Mrs. Cromwell: I know, I know. But why must he come here to-night of all in the year? Oliver's like somebody out of the Bible about to-morrow as it is. This will make him worse. I wish John no harm, but—well, I hope he's got a bad horse.

Elizabeth: Oliver's mind is made up about the common, whatever happens. John will make no difference.

Mrs. Cromwell: You can't pretend he'll make him more temperate.

Elizabeth: It's very wrong to take away the common from the people. I think Oliver is right.

Mrs. Cromwell: Of course he's right. But I'm too old. I've seen too many broken heads. He'll be no righter for a broken head.

BRIDGET CROMWELL, *a girl, comes in. She takes some eggs from her apron and puts them on to a dish on a shelf.*

Bridget: Why, grandmother, whose head is to be broken?

Mrs. Cromwell: Your father's is like to be.

Bridget: You mean to-morrow?

Elizabeth: At the meeting, yes.

Bridget: But he must do it. Why, the people have fished and kept cattle there longer than anyone can remember. Who is an Earl of Bedford to take it away from them? I know I would let my head be broken first.

Elizabeth: It is said that the king gave leave.

Bridget: Then the king gave what wasn't his to give.

Mrs. Cromwell: Now, child, don't you encourage your father, too. He's eager enough without that.

Bridget: But I must, grandmother. There's too much of this kind of interference everywhere. Father says that cousin John Hampden says——

Mrs. Cromwell: And that's three of you in one house. And this young Mr. Ireton has ideas, too, I believe.

Bridget: Mr. Ireton is twenty-eight.

Mrs. Cromwell: That accounts for it.

Bridget: You don't think they just ought to be allowed to take the common away, do you, grandmother?

Mrs. Cromwell: It makes no matter what I think.

Bridget: Of course you don't. None of us do. We couldn't.

Elizabeth: You mustn't tease your grandmother, Bridget.

Mrs. Cromwell: She's a very old lady, and can't speak for herself.

Bridget: I meant no ill manners, grandmother.

Mrs. Cromwell: Never mind your manners, child. But don't encourage your father. He doesn't need it. This house is all commotion as it is.

Bridget: I can't help it. There's so much going on everywhere—the king doesn't deal fairly by people, I'm sure. Men like father must say it.

Elizabeth: Have you put the lavender in the rooms?

Bridget: No. I'll take it now.

She takes a tray from the window and goes out.

Mrs. Cromwell: I don't know what will happen. I sometimes think the world isn't worth quarrelling about at all. And yet I'm a silly old woman to talk like that. But Oliver is a brave fellow—and John, all of them. I want them to be brave in peace—that's the way you think at eighty. (*Reading*): This Mr. Donne is a very good poet, but he's rather hard to understand. I suppose that is being eighty too. Mr. Herrick is very simple. John Hampden sent me some copies from a friend who knows

Mr. Herrick. I like them better than John does. (*She takes up a MS. book and reads*) :

Lord, Thou hast given me a cell
Wherein to dwell;
A little house, whose humble roof
Is waterproof;
Under the spars of which I lie
Both soft and dry. . . .

But Mr. Shakespeare was best of all, I do believe. A very civil gentleman, too. I spoke to him once—that was forty years ago, the year Oliver was born, I remember. He didn't hold with all this talk against kings.

Elizabeth: There are kings and kings. Oliver finds no offence in kings—it's in a king.

Mrs. Cromwell: Well, it's all very dangerous, and I'm too old for it. Not but what Oliver's brain is better than mine. But we have to sit still and watch. However (*reading*) :

Lord, 'tis Thy plenty-dropping hand
That sows my land:
All this and better, dost Thou send
Me for this end:
That I should render for my part
A thankful heart,
Which, fired with incense, I resign
As wholly Thine:
But the acceptance—that must be,
Oh Lord, by Thee.

Mr. Herrick has chosen a nice name for his book: 'Hesperides.' He has taste as well as understanding.

The sound of horsemen arriving is heard.

Elizabeth: That will be John and Mr. Ireton.

She looks from the window, puts her work into a box, and goes out.

Mrs. Cromwell (*turning her pages*):

Ye have been fresh and green,
  Ye have been filled with flowers,
And ye the walks have been
  Where maids have spent their hours.

* * * * *

Like unthrifts, having spent
  Your stock, and needy grown,
You're left here to lament
  Your poor estates alone.

ELIZABETH *comes back with* JOHN HAMPDEN, *aged* 44, *and* HENRY IRETON, 28. *They both shake hands with* MRS. CROMWELL.

Hampden: How do you do, ma'am?

Mrs. Cromwell: Well, John.

Ireton: Good evening, ma'am.

Mrs. Cromwell: You're welcome, Master Ireton, I'm sure. If you behave yourself, young man.

Ireton: How may that be, ma'am?

Mrs. Cromwell: No, don't ask me. Only don't you and John come putting more notions into Oliver's head. I'm sure he's got more than he can rightly manage as it is.

Hampden: We were told down there that it's to-

morrow that my lord of Bedford and his like are to claim the common rights.

Elizabeth: Yes.

Ireton: Mr. Cromwell is to resist, they said.

Mrs. Cromwell: Now, young man, Oliver doesn't need any urging to it. He needs holding back.

Hampden: But that's fine for Oliver. Every man must speak to-day—and do as well if it comes to it.

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes, but don't be so proud about it, John.

Elizabeth: I think they should be proud.

Mrs. Cromwell: Remember what Mr. Herbert says.

> A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgerie divine.
> Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws
> Makes that and th' action fine.

As for thy laws, remember.

Hampden: Surely, we shall remember that always.

BRIDGET *comes in.*

Bridget: Cousin John.

Hampden: Well, Bridget, my girl. (*He kisses her.*)

Bridget: How do you do, Mr. Ireton?

Ireton (*shaking hands*): Well, I thank you, mistress.

Bridget: Does father know, mother?

Elizabeth: I've sent down to the field.

Mrs. Cromwell: He'll be here soon enough. I'm sorry the judges were against you, John. I don't know what else you could expect, though. They are the king's judges, I suppose.

Hampden: That's what we dispute, ma'am. The

king says that they should serve him. We say that they should serve the laws.

Ireton: It was just when Mr. Hampden was being heard. The law, they said, was the king's old and loyal servant: that lex was not rex, but that none could gainsay that rex was lex.

Hampden: That's what we shall have to decide, and before long, I think.

Bridget: Father says that.

Mrs. Cromwell: This house is ready for any kind of revolution, John.

Ireton: But you find it everywhere, ma'am. All along the country-side, in the markets, in the church porches—everywhere.

Elizabeth: Is the vine doing well this year, John?

Hampden: It's the best year I remember.

Elizabeth: Ours, too.

Bridget: Were you there, Mr. Ireton, when cousin John's case was tried?

Ireton: Yes.

Bridget: It was splendid, wasn't it—although he lost, I mean?

Ireton: It was the note of deliverance.

Bridget: I wish I could have been there, cousin John.

Mrs. Cromwell: Will you give me my shawl, Henry Ireton?

He does so.

There's Oliver coming. Now you can all be thunder.

Bridget: Now, grandmother, you know you don't think it's just that.

Mrs. Cromwell: So you have hope for me yet, miss?

Bridget: Grandmother.

CROMWELL *comes in. He is in plain country dress. His age is* 40.

Cromwell: John—it's good to see you. You're an hour before reckoning. (*Taking* HAMPDEN'S *hand.*)

Hampden: Yes, Oliver. Is all well?

Cromwell: Not that—but our courage is well enough. You are very welcome, Henry (*taking his hand*). Was it good travelling?

Ireton: Not a bad mile on the journey.

Bridget: Father, Mr. Ireton heard cousin John's case tried. Wasn't he lucky?

Cromwell: Whoever heard that heard history being made, John. It was a great example to set.

Hampden: One works from the spirit, Oliver.

Cromwell: That's what we must do. You've heard about this affair down here?

Hampden: The common? Yes.

Cromwell: There's to be no yielding about that.

Hampden: I'm glad of it, Oliver.

Mrs. Cromwell: What will it all come to, John?

Cromwell: There are times, mother, when we may not count the cost.

Mrs. Cromwell: You're very vexatious sometimes, Oliver.

Cromwell: But you know I'm right in this, mother.

Mrs. Cromwell: Being right doesn't make you less vexatious.

Elizabeth: Have they finished in Long Close?

Cromwell: Yes. They will be here soon.

Bridget: They all come up from the field for prayers, Mr. Ireton, at the day's end.

Hampden: Is your hay good, Oliver?

Cromwell: I haven't much down this year. What there is, is good.

Hampden: We got the floods too late. But it has mended well enough.

Bridget: The dancers came for some money, father.

Elizabeth: Shall I give them something?

Cromwell: To be sure.

Elizabeth: How much?

Cromwell: Oh—a crown or two.

Hampden: Dancers?

Cromwell: Aye, John. Don't you hold with them?

Hampden: They're no offence perhaps—but I'm never quite sure.

Cromwell: Oh, but be sure, John. We must make no mistake about that. They are lovely, the dancers. I'm all for singing and dancing. The Lord is one to sing and dance, I'll be bound.

Mrs. Cromwell: Now you talk sense, Oliver. Mr. Herrick is very clear about that. So was David.

Ireton: Who is Mr. Herrick, ma'am?

Mrs. Cromwell: He's a poet, young man. And he's for being quiet, and not bustling about everywhere. You ought to read him.

Ireton: Do you know Mr. Herrick's work, Mr. Hampden?

Hampden: I've nothing to say against that, though it's not very serious.

Mrs. Cromwell: Don't be silly, Mr. Hampden—if

you'll excuse me for saying so. Mr. Herrick is very serious indeed, only he isn't always telling us of it.

Hampden: Yes: perhaps you're right, ma'am. I prefer George Herbert.

Bridget: Yes, I like his book, too, cousin John.

Mrs. Cromwell: Well, it's no bad judgment to stand for Mr. Herbert. Only I won't have nonsense talked about Mr. Herrick.

Elizabeth: Are you ready, Oliver? They are coming.

Cromwell: Yes. (*To* HAMPDEN *and* IRETON) Friends, you are welcome to this house.

The labourers from the farm are gathering outside the window. The people in the room form towards them.

Cromwell: Brethren in God, at the end of another day's labour we are met to praise Him from whom are the means to labour and its rewards. As we go about these fields, He is with us. As you deal by me, and I by you, His eye sees us. Nothing good befalls us but it is by His will, no affliction is ours but His loving mercy will hear us. The Lord God walks at our hand. He is here now in our midst. His desires are our freedom, His wrath our tyranny one over another. Be very merciful in all your ways, for mercy is His name. May His counsel be always with our little fellowship. If I should fail towards any man let him speak. May we be as brothers always, one to another. And may we serve Him to serve whom alone is wisdom. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen. 'All people that on earth do dwell.'

They sing.

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him, and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His flock, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

As the men move away, one of them, SETH TANNER, *comes forward.*

Seth: As I came up from Long Close I stopped at the ale-house. Two fellows were there from the Earl of Bedford. Talking they were.

Cromwell: What had they to say?

Seth: It seems they know you are going to stand out for the people to-morrow.

Cromwell: Well?

Seth: Treason, they call it.

Cromwell: Treason.

Seth: Seeing that my lord of Bedford has the king's authority as it were.

Cromwell: Thank you, Seth.

Seth: They were coming here, they said. To warn you, and persuade you against it if it might be.

Cromwell: Thank you, Seth.

Seth (*to* HAMPDEN): If I might be so bold, sir?

Hampden: What, my friend?

Seth: That was a brave thing to do, sir, that about the ship money. We common folk know what it means. I'm sure we thank you with all our hearts.

Hampden: I don't know about brave, but I know it is good to be thanked like that.

Seth: Yes, sir. That's all. Good even, sir; good even, mistress.

He is moving away as two of Bedford's agents appear at the window, followed by the other labourers, who have returned with them.

First Agent: Is this Mr. Oliver Cromwell's?

Cromwell: It is.

Mrs. Cromwell: The door is along there, to the right.

Cromwell: It's no matter, mother. What do you want?

First Agent: To see Mr. Cromwell.

Cromwell: You are speaking to him.

Second Agent: May we come in?

Cromwell: Why, yes.

They do so. The labourers gather round the window again. They follow the coming argument with close personal concern.

Second Agent: May we speak with you alone?

Cromwell: These are all my friends. I have nothing to say that I would not have them hear.

First Agent: It is discretion for your sake.

Cromwell: I do not desire your interest. What have you to say?

Second Agent: It is said that you will oppose the proclamation to-morrow.

Cromwell: Assuredly.

Second Agent: The Earl of Bedford and those with him have not drained these commons for nothing.

Cromwell: Well?

Second Agent: They have earned the rights to be proclaimed to-morrow.

Cromwell: By whose will?

First Agent: By the king's.

Cromwell: These rights of pasture belong to the people. It is within no man's powers to take them away.

Second Agent: The king decrees it.

Cromwell: I know not how that may be. I know that these rights are the people's, above any earl or king whatsoever. The king is to defend our rights, not to destroy them.

First Agent: This is plain treason.

Cromwell: It is plain sense.

Second Agent: What will you do?

Cromwell: To-morrow you will proclaim these rights from the people to my lord of Bedford. To-morrow I shall tell the people that I alone, if needs be, will oppose it. I will fight it from court to court. I will make these rights my rights—as they are. These people of Ely shall speak through me. They shall pay me a groat a year for each head of cattle they graze, and they shall enjoy every

foot of the land as long as I have a word or a pound left for resistance.

Second Agent: You are very arrogant, Mr. Cromwell. There are lessons to be learnt.

Cromwell: Aye, there are lessons. I do not speak to you, but to your master—to the king himself if it comes to that. You may tell him all that I have said. We folk of Ely will use our own commons, and let the Earl of Bedford keep within his own palings. There are lessons, say you. This is Mr. John Hampden. Will you speak to him of lessons? Mr. Hampden's ship money will be a king's lesson, I tell you.

Hampden: You should tell your masters all that you see and hear. Do not flatter them. Let it be the truth. Say that men talk everywhere, more and more openly. Tell them that you heard John Hampden say that the king's Star Chamber was an abomination, that the king soiled his majesty in treating Mr. Prynne and Mr. Bastwick so. Say that you and your like are reviled by all honest men.

Ireton: And you can say that it is no fear of earls or kings that spared you the whipping you would deserve if you were better than shadows.

Bridget: Well said, Mr. Ireton.

There is a demonstration of anger from the labourers, but CROMWELL *checks it.*

Mrs. Cromwell: Now, Henry Ireton, these gentlemen may be bears, but I won't have you make this room into a bear-pit.

Cromwell: No, friends, these men say but what they are sent to say. (*To the agents*) I should not speak to you, but in the hope that you will report it to those that should know. I am a plain burgess of this city. I farm a few lands and am known to none. But I have a faith, that the people of this country are born to be, under God, a free people. That is the fundamental principle of this English life. If your masters, be they who they may, forget that, then, as you say, there will be lessons to be learnt. Here in Ely it is my part to see that my fellows do not lose their birthright. You shall not find us ignorant nor afraid. I would have no violence; let all be by persuasion and tolerance. But these just liberties must not be touched. Will you ask my lord of Bedford to reconsider this?

Second Agent: His lordship will reconsider nothing. The proclamation is to-morrow.

Cromwell: I have no more to say.

First Agent: Be you wary, Mr. Cromwell. These arrogances have their penalties. The king's anger is not light.

Cromwell: You threaten idly. My word is one spoken throughout the land. You can say so.

Second Agent: Mr. Cromwell, we do not——

Cromwell: My mind is fixed. I think I have made my intention clear. That is all. You may go.

There is again a movement against them as they go, followed by the labourers.

Cromwell: Seth.

Seth: Yes, sir.

Cromwell: Ask your father to stay, will you? We shall want a song after that.

Seth: Yes, sir. (*He calls from the window*): Father. Master wants you to sing.

AMOS TANNER *comes back.*

Cromwell: Thank you, Amos. Just a minute, will you? When will supper be, wife?

Elizabeth: In half an hour.

Cromwell: How would a turn at bowling be, John?

Hampden: Done.

Cromwell: Henry, you too?

Ireton: Yes; and Mr. Cromwell. . . .

Cromwell: Yes.

Ireton: I don't know how things are going. But I feel that great events are making, and that you and Mr. Hampden here may have power to use men. If it should be so, I would be used. That is all.

Cromwell: John's the man. I'm likely enough to stay the rest of my days in Ely.

Ireton: I don't think so, sir.

Cromwell: No? Well. A glass of sherry, John—or gin?

Hampden: Sherry, Oliver.

CROMWELL *pours out the sherry.*

Cromwell: Henry?

Ireton: Thank you.

Cromwell (*giving glasses*): Amos?

Amos: I'd liefer have a pot of ale, master, if might be.

Cromwell: Yes, yes. Bridget girl.

BRIDGET *goes.*

Mrs. Cromwell: Oliver boy, you were quite right—all that you said to those men, I mean. I don't approve, mind you, but you were quite right.

Cromwell: Thank you, mother. I knew you would think so.

Elizabeth: I wonder what will come of it. You never know, once you begin like this.

Cromwell: You never know, wife.

Hampden: There are lessons to be learnt.

Cromwell: That's what they said.

BRIDGET *returns with a foaming pot of ale, which she gives to* AMOS.

Cromwell (*drinking*): To freedom, John. That's good sherry. I respect not such ill reasoners as would keep all wine out of the country lest men should be drunk. Now, Amos. Come along, John, my touch was good last night. I shall beat you.

He goes out on to the lawn beyond the window, with HAMPDEN *and* IRETON. *They are seen passing to and fro, playing bowls.*

Amos (*singing*):

When I shall in the churchyard lie,
Poor scholar though I be,
The wheat, the barley, and the rye,
Will better wear for me.

For truly have I ploughed and sown,
And kept my acres clean,
And written on my churchyard stone
This character be seen,

'His flocks, his barns, his gear he made
His daily diligence,
Nor counted all his earnings paid
In pockets-full of pence.'

As he finishes, the bowlers stand listening at the window.

THE SCENE CLOSES.

Scene II.

The Commons of England in session at St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, on November 22nd, 1641. Cromwell, Hampden, Ireton *among those sitting. We see the east end of the Chapel, with* The Speaker.

It is past midnight, and the house is lighted with candles. A member is speaking.

The Member: That the grievances set out in this Remonstrance now before you are just is clear. The matter has been debated by us these eight hours, and none has been able to deny the wrongs which are here set forth. It is not well with our state, and correction is needed. Mr. Ireton has very clearly shown us how this is. But we must be wary. The king is the king, a necessary part, as it must seem to us, of the government of this country.

There are murmurs for and against this; assent in the majority.

To pass this Remonstrance can be no other than to pass a vote of no confidence in that king. Consider this. Saying so much, how shall you deny to overthrow the crown if need be? And who among you is willing to bear that burden?

The murmurs grow to conflicting cries.

I beseech you let us not commit ourselves thus. Nor do not think I am weak in zeal. There are evil

counsellors with the king, and they would destroy us. Our liberties must be looked to. But there should be moderation in this act. We should choose some other way. We must defend ourselves, but we must not challenge the king's authority so.

He sits down to a confusion of voices, and HAMPDEN *rises.*

Hampden: My friend, I think, is deceived. This Remonstrance is not against the king. It is from the people of this country against a policy. We desire no judgment—all we ask is redress. If we assert ourselves as in this instrument, we but put the king in the way of just government. I think the king hardly knows the measure of his wrongs against us, and I say it who have suffered. (*A murmur of assent.*) To speak clearly as is here done will, I think, be to mend his mind towards us. This Remonstrance has been drawn with all care. Not only is its intent free of blame towards the king's majesty and person, but it can, I hope, be read by no fair-minded man in the way that my friend fears. If I thought that, I should consider more closely my support of it. But I have considered with all patience and it seems to me good.

He sits, and again there is a rattle of argument. CROMWELL *rises.*

Cromwell: Sir, this is a day when every man must speak the truth that is in him, or be silent in shame, and for ever. Mr. Hampden is my kinsman, as you know, one who has my best affection. His word has ever been a strength among us, and no man here but knows his valiance in the cause. His has been a

long suffering, and his integrity but ripens. But I do not read this occasion as he does, nor, let me say, do I fear it as does our friend who spoke before. That gentleman pleads that this Remonstrance is a vote of want of confidence in the king, such as none of us would willingly pass. Mr. Hampden replies that it is no such vote. I say to you that it is such a vote, and that I would pass it with all my heart. Sir, this country, the spirit of man in this country, has suffered grievances too great to be borne. By whom are they laid upon us? I say it is by the king. Is a man's estate secure to himself? Does not the king pass upon it levies for his own designs? You know that it is so. Is there not ship money? Mr. Hampden can tell you. Is not that the king's affair? Is there not a Star Chamber? Ask Mr. Prynne and those others. These men disliked the king's church — a very dangerous church as it seems to me—and were bold to say so. And for that each was fined five thousand pounds and had his ears cut off, and is now in prison for life. And does not the Star Chamber belong to the king? Who among you can deny it? And this land is bruised, I tell you, by such infamies. There is no sureness in a man for his purse, or his body, or his conscience. The king—not the head of the state, mark you, expressing the people's will in one authority —but this man, Charles Rex, may use all these as he will. I aim not to overthrow the monarchy. I know its use and fitness in the realm as well as any. But this can endure no longer. The king is part of the state, but we have a king who has sought to put the

state to his private use. The king should have his authority, but it is an authority subject to the laws of the people. This king denies it, and his judges flatter the heresy. You have but one question before you—there is in truth but one raised by this Remonstrance. Is England to be governed by the king or by elected representatives of the people? That is what we have now to decide, not for ourselves alone, but for our children in the generations to come. If the king will profit by a lesson, I with any man will be his loyal and loving subject. But at this moment a lesson must be given. Why else have you appointed my lord of Essex from Parliament to take command of the armed forces of this country? Did you not fear that the king would use these also against you? You know you did. I say it again, this that is now to be put to you is a vote of want of confidence in the king. I would it were so more expressly.

He sits to an angry tumult. HAMPDEN *rises, and after a time secures order.*

Hampden: Sir, this question could not be argued to an end if we sat here for a week. Already we have considered it more closely and longer, I think, than any that has ever been before this House. It is morning. Each man has spoken freely from his mind. I move that the question now be put.

The Speaker: The question is, whether this question now be put.

There are cries of 'Yea' and 'No.'

The Speaker: I think the Yeas have it.

This is followed by silence in the house.

The Speaker: Then the question now before the House is whether this Declaration shall pass.

Again there are cries of 'Yea' and 'No,' strongly emphatic on both sides.

The Speaker: I think the Yeas have it.

There are loud and repeated cries of 'No.'

The Speaker: The House will divide. Tellers for the Yeas, Sir John Clotworthy, Mr. Arthur Goodwyn. Tellers for the Noes, Sir Frederick Cornwallis and Mr. Strangwayes. The Yeas to go forth.

The House divides, the Yeas, including CROMWELL, HAMPDEN, *and* IRETON, *leaving the house, the Noes remaining seated. The tellers for the Noes, with their staffs, count their numbers in the house, while the tellers for the Yeas at the door count theirs as they re-enter. The pent-up excitement grows as the Yeas resume their seats and the telling draws to a close. The tellers move up to the Speaker and give in their figures.*

The Speaker: The Noes, 148. The Yeas, 159. The Yeas have it by eleven.

The announcement is received with a loud turmoil of cheering, during which IRETON *rises.*

Ireton: Sir, I move that this measure, as passed by this House, be printed and distributed throughout the land.

The House breaks out into a wild disturbance, Yea shouting against No, swords being drawn and members hustling each other. THE SPEAKER *and* HAMPDEN *at length pacify them.*

Hampden: I beg you remember what business you

are on. These are grave times, for stout wills, but temperate blood. I beg you. Gentlemen.

The Speaker: The question is, whether this Declaration shall be printed and distributed. (*Cries of* '*Yea*' *and* '*No.*') I think the Noes have it.

Again there is tumult, during which THE SPEAKER *leaves his chair and the house, and the session breaks up, the members leaving in passionate discussion.* CROMWELL, HAMPDEN *and* IRETON *stand talking.*

Cromwell (to Hampden): It is the beginning.

Hampden: It may mean terror in this land.

Cromwell: It may. But the country must be delivered. I had thought to live in peace among my Ely acres. I sought none of this. But we must serve. If this Remonstrance had been rejected I would have sold all I have and have never seen England more. And I know there are many other honest men of this same resolution.

Ireton: The issue is set. We may have to spend all that we have.

Cromwell: Our goods, our peace, our lives.

Hampden: We must be diligent among the people.

Cromwell: It is the Lord's will.

Ireton: I can speak for many in Nottinghamshire.

Cromwell: They will be needed.

Hampden: I can spend a thousand pounds on arms.

Cromwell: Arms. Yes. If it must be. But God may spare us.

There is a sound of argument outside, and BRIDGET CROMWELL, *persuading an officer of*

the house to let her enter, comes in with AMOS TANNER. *They are both from a long journey.*

Bridget (*greeting her father and the others*): I went to your lodging and learnt that you were still here.

Cromwell: But what is it, daughter?

Bridget: Amos here—we had to come.

Cromwell: Well?

Amos: My boy—there, I can't tell.

Bridget: Seth—you know he came to London last year.

Cromwell: Yes.

Bridget: It seems he was in a tavern here one evening, and they were talking about ship money. Seth said it was a bad thing, and he spoke of our cousin Hampden.

Amos: He remembered Mr. Hampden when he was at Ely, sir. He always took a great opinion of Mr. Hampden, Seth did.

Bridget: He said cousin John was a great patriot because he wouldn't pay. The king's spies were there. Seth was taken. He got a message sent down to Amos. It was to be a Star Chamber matter.

Amos: There wasn't a better lad in the shire, sir.

Cromwell: What has been done?

Bridget: We don't know. I brought Amos up at once to find you. I wanted to come alone, but he wouldn't let me.

Amos: I couldn't stay, sir. They'll not have hurt him, surely?

Bridget: What will they do? Is it too late? Can't it be stopped?

Cromwell: Bassett.

The officer comes.

Bassett: Yes, sir.

Cromwell: Have you heard any Star Chamber news these last days?

Bassett: Nothing out of the way, sir. A few croppings and brandings.

Cromwell: Any names?

Bassett: Jollyboy was one. That's an anyhow name for a man now, isn't it? Lupton there was, too. He was cropped both ears—said a bishop was a man. That was blasphemous. And a fellow about ship money. That was savage. Tanner his name was.

Amos: Yes—but not Seth—it wasn't Seth Tanner?

Bassett: Tanner was all I heard.

Amos: It wouldn't be Seth.

Bridget: What did they do to him?

Bassett: It's not proper hearing for your sort. But they let him go.

Cromwell: What was it? The girl has heart enough.

Bassett: Both thumbs, both ears, the tongue, and a T on the forehead.

Amos: It wasn't Seth, sir. It couldn't be Seth—not like that. He was the beauty of the four parishes.

Bassett (to Cromwell): Was he something to do with you, sir?

Cromwell: There is a boy, Seth Tanner, we have a care for.

Bassett: Because I made bold to take him in. He

was dazed as it were—didn't seem to know where to go.

Cromwell: It was a good man's doing. Where is he?

Bassett: I live under the walls here, as you might say.

Cromwell: Could we see him?

Bassett: Nay—it's no place to take you to. But I'll fetch him if you will. He doesn't sleep.

Cromwell: Do, then.

BASSETT *goes.*

Amos: It's not my Seth, is it, sir? Not his tongue—and a bloody T. They would know how he could sing, and he looked like Gabriel in the books.

Hampden: Shall we go, Oliver?

Cromwell: No. Let us all see it out.

Bridget: Father, it's horrible. They don't do things like that, do they?

Amos: Dumb—and a bloody T—and the thumbs. It's some other poor lad.

BASSETT *returns, with him a figure, the hands and ears bound up in rough thick bandages, and on his forehead a burning red* T. *He looks at them, with reason hardly awake.*

Amos (*going to him*): Seth—Seth, boy.

SETH *moves his lips, but makes no sound. They look at him in horror.*

Bridget: Father—father.

Cromwell: There—no—no. (*To* BASSETT) Take him, good fellow. Care for him as you can. Get a surgeon for him. Here's money. No, no, old man.

BASSETT *goes with* SETH.

Amos: A bloody T. And dumb. God blast the king.

Cromwell: Take him to our lodging, daughter. Go with them, Ireton. I'll follow.

BRIDGET, AMOS *and* IRETON *go.*

Cromwell: John, you are my best-beloved friend.

Hampden: I praise myself in that more than in most.

Cromwell: I call you to witness. That is a symbol. Before God, I will not rest until all that it stands for in this unhappy England is less than the dust. Amen.

Hampden: Amen.

A linkman is heard calling in the street.

CROMWELL *and* HAMPDEN *go out.*

THE SCENE ENDS.

Scene III.

Cromwell's *house at Ely. A year later*, 1642. *It is afternoon in winter.* Mrs. Cromwell *is sitting by the fire, reading. She looks a little more her eighty odd years than she did in the first scene.*

After a few moments Bridget *comes in. She is opening a letter.*

Bridget: Father has written, grandmother. Shall I read it to you?

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes, child.

Bridget *sits by the fire, and reads.*

Bridget:

My dear Daughter,

I am lately arrived in London, from Edgehill in the county of Warwickshire, where for the first time our men met the king's army in set dispute. It was late on the Sabbath afternoon, so that, as we lay for the attack, the sound of church bells came to us from three or four places. The king had the better ground, also they exceeded us in numbers, both horse and foot, and in cannon. It is hard to say which way the battle went, the advantage at one time being here, at another there. Their horsemen behaved very well, being commanded by Prince Rupert, a soldier of great courage in the field. Your cousin Hampden managed a regiment with much honour, and twice or thrice delivered our cause.

We were engaged until night stayed us. Some four thousand were slain, their loss, I hear, being the greater. Of the sixty in my own troop eighteen fell. We had commendation from the general, and indeed I think we did not fail in resolution. But this matter will not be accomplished save we build as it were again from the foundation. This is God's service, and all must be given. To which end I am now coming home, to call out all such men as have the love of England in their hearts, and fear God. I shall labour with them. It seems to me that I shall be called to great trust in this, and I will set such example as I can. Expect me as soon as you receive this, for indeed I leave London as soon almost as my letter. Your mother I saw here with her nephew. She loves you as I do. Henry Ireton comes with me—he served very stoutly at Edgehill, and hath a gunshot in the arm. None is like to serve these times better than he. Give my loving duty to your grandmother, which I shall at once deliver myself. God bless you.

Your affectionate
FATHER.

Mrs. Cromwell: You are born into a great story, child. I am old.

Bridget: It's wonderful. To stand like that.

Mrs. Cromwell: Not wonder only, girl. There are griefs.

Bridget: They are wonderful too, I think.

Mrs. Cromwell: Youth, you are dear. With an old woman, it's all reckoning. One sees the follies then of this man and that.

Bridget: It had to come, grandmother. The king was taking all.

Mrs. Cromwell: It had to come. Men were no wiser than that. To make this of the land. One Cain, as your father says.

Bridget: It's as though life were different, suddenly. Do you feel it, grandmother?

Mrs. Cromwell: I know. There are times when wrath comes, and beauty is forgotten. But it must be.

Bridget (*from the letter*): 'This is God's service, and all must be given.'

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes. Even that.

Bridget: But you do think father is right?

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes, child. He could do no other. That's his tribute to necessity. We all pay it. He will pay it greatly. We may be sure of that.

Horses are heard outside.

Here they are.

BRIDGET *goes out to meet* CROMWELL *and* IRETON, *with whom she returns in a moment.* IRETON'S *right arm is in a sling.* MRS. CROMWELL *has put her book aside, and is standing. She embraces* OLIVER.

Cromwell: Well, mother. Almost before our own tidings, eh?

Mrs. Cromwell: Bless you, son. How d'ye do, Henry Ireton? (*shaking hands with him*). Is it Colonel Ireton yet?

Ireton: No, ma'am.

Cromwell: Soon, mother. He is marked.

Bridget: Is the arm——

Ireton: No, nothing.

Cromwell: The mayor has not come yet?

Bridget: No. You expect him?

Cromwell: Yes. We must work at once.

A bell rings.

Bridget: That may be the mayor. I will bring him.

She goes out.

Cromwell: Elizabeth sends her devotion to you, mother.

Mrs. Cromwell: Thank her, truly. Well, boy, it has begun.

Cromwell: We must dispute it to the end now.

Mrs. Cromwell: May England prosper by you.

Cromwell: With God's help, amen.

BRIDGET *returns with the Mayor of Ely.*

Cromwell: Welcome, Mr. Mayor.

The Mayor: Your good day, Captain Cromwell. (*To* MRS. CROMWELL) Ma'am. (*To* IRETON) Sir.

Cromwell: Will you sit?

They all sit, MRS. CROMWELL, BRIDGET *and* IRETON *by the fire.* CROMWELL *and* THE MAYOR *at the table.*

The Mayor: At Edgehill in Warwickshire, I hear?

Cromwell: Yes.

The Mayor: The issue was left uncertain, it is said?

Cromwell: Of that battle, yes. But I think the issue was there decided, some few of us there learning what must now be done. Those few held firmly at Edgehill, keeping us as far from defeat as we were, though that was little enough. For our troops are

most of them old decayed serving-men, and tapsters, and such kind of fellows; and their troops are gentlemen's sons, younger sons and persons of quality. Do you think that the spirits of such base mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honour and courage and resolution in them? We must get men of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go, or we shall be beaten still. We must raise such men as have the fear of God before them, such men as make some conscience of what they do. We must do this, Mr. Mayor. I never thought to use a sword, but now all must be given that it may be used well. I would have you send a summons to all the people of this town and country-side. Bid them meet two days hence in the market-place at noon. I will tell them of all these things. I will show them how the heart of England is threatened. We must give, we must be diligent in service, we must labour. An army is to be made—we must make it. We have no help but our own hands—by them alone we must save this country. Will you send out this summons?

The Mayor (*rising*): It shall be done, this hour. My service to you.

He bows to all and goes.

Cromwell: Nothing is to be spared, the cause must have all. We must be frugal, mother. Daughter, help as you can.

Bridget: I will indeed, father.

Mrs. Cromwell: You commit yourself, boy, beyond turning back in all this.

Cromwell: It must be so. The choice has been made, and is past.

Mrs. Cromwell: The Lord prosper you. But I am an old woman. Age can but have misgivings.

Cromwell: We must have none, mother. We have gone to this in prayer, we must establish it in belief. Every yeoman, all the workers in the land, all courtesy and brave reason look to us. What men hereafter shall make of their lives must be between them and God in their own hearts. But to-day it must be given to them, the right to live as they most truly may in the light of their own proper character. No king may be against us. He may lead us, but he may not be against us. Have no misgivings, mother. Faith everywhere, that is our shield.

Mrs. Cromwell (*rising*): I will be no hindrance, son.

Cromwell: You are my zeal. I grew to it in you.

Mrs. Cromwell: I must see.

She goes out.

Cromwell: How is Seth, Bridget?

Bridget: He mends daily. Amos tends him like a mother.

Cromwell: I must see them. Send to Mistress Hall and Robert. Let us have music this evening. Anthony, too. Let him bring his flute. There's good music here, Henry.

He goes.

Bridget: Robert Hall sings beautifully.

Ireton: Will you sing, too?

Bridget: I expect so.

Ireton: I once tried to learn the flute. It was no good. I couldn't do it unless I watched my fingers.

Bridget: Was it very terrible at Edgehill?

Ireton: Yes.

Bridget: Were we really beaten?

Ireton: No. A few saved us from that.

Bridget: Were you one?

Ireton: Your father was chief among them.

Bridget: Was he?

Ireton: He will lead armies. Every man will follow him. He never faltered, and there was no misjudgment, ever.

Bridget: Did you keep the horses you had when you left London?

Ireton: Yes, both of us.

Bridget: I was glad to see you then.

Ireton: You know what is coming?

Bridget: Yes. I see it.

Ireton: We shall live with danger now. It may take years. Many of us will not see the end. We are no longer our own.

Bridget: These are the best crusades.

Ireton: To be called, thus. To be led by such a one. I know your father will direct it—he must be the man. He is only a captain to-night, but in a month or two you will see. And we shall be a mighty following. I see them forming, terrible hosts. We must give all, truly. I shall give all I think. It is little enough. Bridget.

Bridget: Yes.

Ireton: You promised. I might speak again, you said.

Bridget: Yes.

Ireton: Will you wed a man so dedicated?

Bridget: The more for that. Yes, Henry.

Ireton (*as they embrace*): May we tell your father now?

Bridget: Yes—if I can but help you to serve.

Ireton: You shape my service. In you shall all the figures of my service dwell. Will he take this kindly?

Bridget: Surely. He loves you, he has said it often.

CROMWELL *returns.*

Bridget: Father, Henry Ireton has to speak to you.

Cromwell: Eh?

Ireton: Yes. Mr. Cromwell.

Cromwell: Quite so. Mr. Cromwell. That's very interesting now, isn't it?

Ireton: By your leave I would marry Bridget.

Cromwell: I dare say. You would be a very foolish young man else. And what of Bridget's leave?

Bridget: He has that.

Cromwell: I should think so, too. Well?

Ireton: You consent?

Cromwell: I could do nothing more gladly. You have chosen well, both of you. I rejoice for you. But you must wait until this business we have in hand is gathered up a little.

Bridget: Yes, father. It is better so.

Cromwell: Let your mother know of the betrothal. I will write as well.

Bridget: To-night.

Cromwell: Seth asked to see you, Henry.

Ireton: Shall we go?

Bridget: Yes.

BRIDGET *and* IRETON *go.*

CROMWELL *lights a candle, gets paper and pen, and sits at the table writing. After a few moments* MRS. CROMWELL *comes in. She carries a large bunch of keys.* CROMWELL *looks up, and continues writing. She unlocks a large wooden chest, and takes some parchment deeds from it. Then she comes to* CROMWELL *at the table.*

Mrs. Cromwell: Oliver.

Cromwell: Yes, mother.

Mrs. Cromwell: These are my five Ely houses, and the Huntingdon farmlands. Use them.

Cromwell: But it's all you have.

Mrs. Cromwell: My needs are few, and I have not many days.

Cromwell (*rising*): I will use them, mother, worthily, with God's help. (*He kisses her.*)

Mrs. Cromwell: Bless you, my son. Bless you always. And may the mercy of God be upon England.

Cromwell: Upon England.

He places the deeds on the table before him, and resumes his writing. MRS. CROMWELL *closes the chest, and sits at a spinet, playing.*

Mrs. Cromwell: Mr. Lawes makes beautiful music, Oliver.

Cromwell: Yes, mother.

She plays again for a few moments. Then BRIDGET *and* IRETON *return.*

Bridget: Amos and Seth want to speak to you, father. The men are coming.

Cromwell: Yes.

She beckons them in.

Cromwell: Bridget has news for you, mother.

BRIDGET *and* IRETON *go to* MRS. CROMWELL.

Amos: I meant to speak when you were down there, sir. But I'm a bit slow. There's two things, so to say.

Cromwell: Yes, Amos.

Amos: There's to be great wars and spending, I know.

Cromwell: Yes, Amos.

Amos: I should like to give the little I've saved. You'll spend it well, sir, I know. It's a matter of two pound. It's not a deal, but it might help by way of an example, as it might be.

He offers a small bag of money.

Cromwell: In such measure it shall be taken from all who will give. That is true in spirit, Amos. It shall be used.

He places it with the deeds.

Amos: And then if I might speak for Seth.

Cromwell: Yes, what is it?

Amos: He's dumb, sir, it's true, but you'll find no better heart nor wits. And he has a fair lot of book-learning now as well, and has come to handle a pen for all his poor hands were treated so. He would be your servant, sir, in the wars.

Cromwell: It's a good offer. Very well, Seth, we'll serve together.

SETH *acknowledges this, gravely pleased. There are voices outside.*

Bridget: They are coming, father. Are you ready?

Cromwell: Yes.

BRIDGET *opens the door on to the stone hall, and the labourers stand at the door and beyond.*

Cromwell (rising): My friends, I know not to what labour you will next be called, but we are upon dark and proving days, coming to memorable issues. The tyranny that has worked among us so grievously and long now strikes at our all. We must betake ourselves to defence, or this will be but a rotten realm, fair for no man to live in henceforth. Do not be mistaken. In the way of life out of which has come this menacing destruction upon us, is much of beauty, much of nobility and the light of man's mind. These things it will be for us in season to cherish and preserve. But where these have been is no warrant for authority abused. And authority this day is an abuse against us to the very pitch of wickedness. We are called to stand for the charter of all men's faith, for the charter which is liberty, which is God. Against us are arrayed the ranks of privilege. They are mighty, well used in arms, fearless, and not easily to be turned aside. But we go to battle in the name of God. Let every man consider it. Each one of you is here and now called to service in that name, that hereafter in England a man may call his hearth his own. And now may the

love of God inform you. In humble courage let us go forward, nourishing our strength, sure always in our cause. May God bless us, and teach us the true valiance, and may He spend us according to His will. Amen. The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

Together they sing, AMOS *leading them.*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still water.

He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me. . . .

THE SCENE CLOSES.

Scene IV.

After dawn on July 14th, 1645, the day of Naseby.

General Fairfax, *with* Ireton—*now Colonel—and two other officers, is holding a council of war in his tent. He is working to a map. During the proceedings sentries pass to and fro.*

Fairfax: Between Mill Hill, and Sulby Hall, there. Broad Moor—yes. You measure their numbers at ten thousand, Staines?

Staines: Not more than ten, nor less than eight.

Fairfax: Four thousand or so of them horse?

Staines: It is thought so.

Fairfax: Yes, yes. We are eleven thousand, eh, Pemberton?

Pemberton: Eleven thousand and perhaps three hundred.

Fairfax: Naseby will be three-quarters—no, half a mile behind us.

Ireton: The right of the field is boggy, and pitted by rabbits. The action is like to move to the left.

Fairfax: Yes. There's a high hedge above there below Sulby. It would be useful to us then.

Staines: It has been marked, and dug almost to the water-side.

Fairfax: Good. Skippon and myself with the infantry there and there. Then the cavalry—you

have one wing, Ireton, or you must command all, since General Cromwell is not come.

Pemberton: Is there any word of him?

Fairfax: None.

Staines: They do not consider us at Westminster.

Ireton: It is disastrous of them to hesitate so. They do not understand.

Fairfax: No. I have told them that to-day is to be made the fiercest trial of all, but they do not listen.

Pemberton: Where is General Cromwell?

Fairfax: None knows. These months he has been up and down the land, exhorting, stirring up opinion, watching the discipline of our new armies, lending his personal authority in bringing men's minds to the cause. But to-day we need him here. He should have been sent. We need him.

Ireton: Urgently. Charles and Rupert are staking all on this.

Staines: They were never in better tune. It is as though every man were picked.

Fairfax: I said this to Westminster.

Ireton: We carry too many callow soldiers against them. Example will be everything. General Cromwell and his chosen troops have that, and experience, none like them.

Pemberton: Does the General himself know of our necessity, do you think, sir?

Fairfax: There is no tracing him. He almost certainly does not know, or he would have insisted. There are rumours of him from the eastern counties, of some activities with his men, but no more.

Ireton: And the hope of England here in grave peril. Westminster is disgraceful.

Staines: Your appeal was plain, sir—weighty enough?

Fairfax (*taking a paper from the table*): You may hear for yourself. (*Reading the end of a letter copy*) 'The general esteem and affection which he hath with the officers and soldiers of this whole army, his own personal worth and ability for employment, his great care, diligence, courage, and faithfulness in the services you have already employed him in, with the constant presence and blessing of God that have accompanied him, make us look upon it as the duty we owe to you and the public, to make it our suit.'

Pemberton: It is shameful of them.

Ireton: It is. But that hope is gone. Do I take the left, sir?

Fairfax: You must choose. The horse entirely are your command now.

Ireton: Whalley on the right, and you, Pemberton.

Fairfax: What's the hour?

Staines: Six o'clock, sir.

Fairfax: They have had three hours. Let the army sleep till ten if it may be.

Staines: Yes, sir.

Ireton: Are you satisfied about those footmen on the left, sir?

Fairfax: No, not satisfied. But we cannot better it.

Pemberton: Rupert is almost certain to see the weakness there.

Fairfax: Yes, but there it is. Skippon must cover it as he can. We have spoken of it very exactly.

Ireton: If either wing of our horse breaks, it means certain disaster there, even though Skippon could hold in the centre.

Fairfax: That's Cromwell again. And all to satisfy the pride of a few useless members that his self-denying ordinance keeps out of command.

Staines: Do you think it's that, sir?

Fairfax: What else? They are more jealous that he should come to no more honour than that we should succeed. And after all that has been given.

Ireton: The blood.

Pemberton: It is abominable.

Fairfax: But there—we must not distress ourselves. We have our own loyalty. Keep in touch with Skippon, Staines. If you can push their right foot up towards Sibbertoft there, spare nothing in the doing. Have you all slept, gentlemen?

Ireton and the Others: Yes, sir.

Fairfax: Since we lack General Cromwell, more depends on you, Ireton, than on any man, perhaps. You will not be wanting, I know.

Ireton: In endeavour at least—and we can die.

A SCOUT *comes in.*

Fairfax: Yes?

The Scout: Something moves across from the east, sir. It is very faint. It may be haze, or it may be dust.

Fairfax: Watch. Come again at once.

The SCOUT *goes.* FAIRFAX *and the others go to the tent opening and look out.*

Fairfax: Yes—there. It is moving, isn't it?

Ireton: I think not.

Staines: Surely.

Pemberton: Could it be?

Fairfax: No. We should have heard.

Ireton: And yet it seems to be moving.

Fairfax: Gentlemen, we must keep counsel with ourselves. This is to waste. Nerves must be unclouded to-day.

He returns to his seat, the others with him.

Fairfax: Finally, if we on the right have to fall back on Mill Hill, bring your horse down on to the Kilmarsh road, Pemberton, if it be any way possible.

Pemberton: Yes—there's a ford there, at the fork if we are up stream.

Ireton: I'll speak to Whalley, too.

Fairfax: If at last there should be a general retreat, it is to the west of Naseby, remember.

Ireton: Yes. To the west. That there should be that even in the mind.

Fairfax: In that case, the baggage is my concern.

Outside is heard a low murmur of excitement.

Fairfax: Staines, will you tell Conway that five hundred of his best men must dispute the Naseby road to the last. And let Mitchell command under him.

Staines: Yes, sir.

The noise outside grows.

Pemberton: What is it?

Fairfax: See.

PEMBERTON *goes to the tent opening and looks out.*

Pemberton: Our men are watching something. It is something moving. Horsemen—it must be.

The excitement grows and grows. IRETON *joins* PEMBERTON.

Ireton: There is something.

Fairfax: Gentlemen, let us promise ourselves nothing.

IRETON *and* PEMBERTON *move into the tent at* FAIRFAX'S *word. As they do so the voices outside break out into a great shout, 'Ironsides—Ironsides—Ironsides is coming to lead us.' The* SCOUT *comes in, glowing.*

Fairfax (rising): Yes?

The Scout: General Cromwell is riding into the field with his Ironsides, sir, some six hundred strong.

Fairfax: Thank God.

CROMWELL *comes into the tent, fully armed, hot and dusty from the road. The shouting dies away, but outside there is a sound as of new life until the end of the scene.* SETH, OLIVER'S *servant, stands at the tent opening.*

Fairfax: You are welcome, none can say how much.

Cromwell: A near thing, sir. I only heard from Westminster yesterday at noon.

Fairfax: They told us nothing.

Cromwell: There are many poor creatures at Westminster, sir. Many of them I doubt not would have willingly had me kept uninformed of this. But

we are in time, and that's all. Henry. Good morning, gentlemen. How goes it?

Fairfax (*taking his seat*, CROMWELL *and the others also at the table*): The battle is set. Our foot there, Skippon and myself. Colonel Ireton and Whalley are with the horse. They are at your service.

Cromwell (*at the map*): Rupert will be there. Langdale, if I mistake not, will be there. That road—is it good?

Pemberton: Poor below Mill Hill, sir.

Cromwell: Then that is the point; it may be decisive there. You take the left, Henry.

Ireton: Yes, sir.

Cromwell: Let Whalley be on my left here—give him fifteen hundred. I have six hundred. I'll take the right with them myself. Are you on the left, sir?

Fairfax: Yes, and the second line.

Cromwell: Good—can I have two of the best regiments down here behind me?

Fairfax: Yes. Staines, let Spilsby see to that.

Cromwell: Spilsby is good.

Staines: If I might say it, would you choose him for that, sir? It is a great responsibility, and he has been indiscreet. I thought not to use him to-day.

Cromwell: Indiscreet?

Staines: In his utterances, sir. His belief is in some question.

Cromwell: Surely you are not well advised to turn off one so faithful to the cause, and so able to serve you as this man is. He is indiscreet, you say. It may be so in some things, we all have human infir-

mities. Sir, the State, in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions. If men be willing faithfully to serve it, that satisfies. Let it be Spilsby.

Staines: Yes, sir.

Cromwell: Is the army well rested, sir?

Fairfax: They are resting now. Till ten o'clock. We moved up at three.

Cromwell: Three hours for my men. It is enough. The order to advance at eleven?

Fairfax: At eleven.

Cromwell: Is the word for the day chosen?

Fairfax: Not yet.

Cromwell: Let it be 'God our strength.' Gentlemen.

They all rise, and, bareheaded, together they repeat 'God our strength.'

THE SCENE CLOSES.

Scene V.

The same tent. Night—with torches and candles. An Aide *stands at the tent opening. The sentries pass to and fro. It is after the action.* Ireton, *severely wounded, is on a couch, surgeons attending him.* Cromwell, *himself battered and with a slight head wound, stands by the couch.*

Cromwell: It is not mortal. You are sure of that?

The Surgeon: He is hurt, grievously, but he will live now.

Cromwell: The danger is gone?

The Surgeon: Yes. But it will be slow.

Ireton: Whalley—there—in God's name, man. Tell Spilsby to beat down under General Cromwell. There's not a minute to lose. Whalley—that's good—come—no, man—left—left—now, once more. God is our strength.

Cromwell: There, my son. Brave, brave. It is well.

Ireton (*himself*): How is it—out there?

Cromwell: They are scattered.

Ireton: Scattered. Write to Bridget.

Cromwell: Yes—it is done.

Ireton: Read.

Cromwell (*reading a letter from the table*): My dearest daughter. This in all haste. We have fought to-day

at Naseby. The field at all points is ours. They are destroyed beyond mending. Henry is hurt, but he is well attended, and the surgeons have no fear. He shall be brought to you by the first means. He has great honour to-day for himself and for us all.

Ireton: He loves you.

CROMWELL *adds a word to the letter. Then he leaves* IRETON *to the surgeons and speaks to* SETH, *who is at the table.*

Cromwell: Seth, will you write, please. (*He dictates very quietly, not to disturb* IRETON.) To the Speaker of the Commons of England, at Westminster. Sir, this, of which the General advises you, is none other but the hand of God, and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him. The General served you with all faithfulness and honour; and the best commendation I can give him is, that I daresay he attributes all to God, and would rather perish than assume to himself. Which is an honest and a thriving way; and yet as much for bravery may be given to him, in this action, as to a man. Honest men served you faithfully in this action. Sir, they are trusty; I beseech you, in the name of God, not to discourage them. I wish this action may beget thankfulness and humility in all that are concerned in it. He that ventures his life for the liberty of his country, I wish he trust God for the liberty of his conscience, and you for the liberty he fights for. In this he rests, who is your most humble servant. . . . From the camp at Naseby field, in Northamptonshire.

He signs the letter. Outside in the night the Puritan troops are heard singing the 117*th Psalm.*

'O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us; and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord.'

They listen, IRETON *sleeps.*

Cromwell: They sing well. (*He looks at a map, then, to* THE AIDE.) Go to General Peyton. Tell him to keep three troops of horse four miles down the Leicester road there. He is not to move them till daybreak. And ask Colonel Reade to let me have his figures as soon as he can.

The Aide: Yes, sir.

He goes.

Cromwell: Finish that other letter, will you?

SETH *writes again.*

I can say this of Naseby. When I saw the enemy draw up and march in gallant order towards us, and we, a company of poor ignorant men to seek how to order our battle—the General having commanded me to order all the horse—I could not, riding alone about my business, but smile out to God in my praises, in assurance of victory,

The Psalm is heard again.

because God would, by things which are not, bring to naught the things that are. Of which I had great assurance, and God did it.

The singing still heard,

THE SCENE CLOSES.

Scene VI.

An evening in November, 1647. A room in Hampton Court where Charles the First, *now a prisoner with the army, is lodged.*

At a table, writing, is Neal, *the king's secretary. He finishes his document, and going to a bureau locks it away. He returns to the table, and, taking up an unopened envelope, examines it carefully. As he is doing so* Charles *enters from an inner room.*

Charles: From Hamilton?

Neal: Yes, sire.

Charles: Has it been opened?

Neal: I think not.

Charles *takes the letter, opens and reads it.*

Charles: Good. The commissioners from Scotland are in London. They are prepared to hear from us.

Neal: Andrews goes to London to-night. He is to be trusted.

Charles: Everything begins to move for us again. To-morrow they will miss us here, eh, Neal? In a week we should be at Carisbrooke.

Neal: Do not be too confident, sire. Things have miscarried before.

Charles: But not this time, Neal, believe me. Their House and their army are at odds. I've seen to that. It has gained time, and perplexed their

resolution. And now Scotland will strike again, and this time mortally. Yes, the end will be with us, mark me.

Neal: May your majesty reckon truly.

Charles: Is Cromwell coming to-night?

Neal: He said not.

Charles: Strangely, the fellow grows on me. But he's a fool, Neal. Brave, but a fool. He sees nothing. Indeed, he's too dull. Ireton too—they are heavy stuff. Clods. Poor country. She needs us again truly. To check such mummers as these—all means are virtuous for that, Neal, eh?

Neal: Your majesty knows.

Charles: Yes, we need no counsel. You are sure that Cromwell was not coming to-night?

Neal: That was as he said, sire.

Charles: Then let us consider. These Scots. What was it? Did you set it down?

Neal: Yes, sire.

He gets the paper that he put in the bureau, and gives it to CHARLES.

Charles (*reading it*): Yes. Write.

NEAL *does so on a large folio sheet.*

Clause 1. For the reason that the Scots should invade England. Let the intrigues of parliament with the army and its leaders—notably Oliver Cromwell—to the peril of the church and the king, stand to the world in justification. Clause 2. The royal forces in England shall move when and as the Duke of Hamilton directs. Clause 3. The king shall guarantee Presbyterian control in England for three

years from this date. But the king shall for himself be at liberty to use his own form of divine service. Clause 4. All opinion and practice of those who call themselves Independents are to be suppressed. To see that this is diligently done may be left to the king's pleasure . . . Yes. Once we are at Carisbrooke. . . . Copy that, Neal. I will sign it. Let it go by Andrews to-night.

Neal: Yes, sire.

Charles: Do it now.

NEAL *proceeds to do so.* CHARLES *moves across to a book-case between the table and the main door. As he stands there, there is a knock at the door.*

Charles: Yes.

The door is opened by CROMWELL, *with whom is* IRETON.

Charles: Mr. Cromwell. We did not expect you.

Cromwell: No, sir. It is unexpected.

As the two men come into the room CHARLES *covers* NEAL *from them as he can. The secretary has no time but to conceal his note by placing it under a case of folio papers on the table. As the others approach the table, he bows and retires.* CHARLES *sits, and motions the others to do the same.* CROMWELL *takes* NEAL'S *place.*

Cromwell: We came, sir, to reassure ourselves.

Charles: As to what?

Cromwell: Your majesty knows that in treating with you as we have done these months past, we have been subject to suspicions.

Charles: I imagined that it might be so. But your character and your reputation, Mr. Cromwell, can ignore these.

Cromwell: It is suggested that we become courtiers, and susceptible as courtiers are. But that is nothing. Continually we are told that your majesty will outwit us.

Charles: But that is too fantastic. Between men so open one with another. Our scruples—persuasion—yes, these may take time. We may not always easily understand each other there. But that there should be any question of duplicity between us—it is monstrous. We may disagree, stubbornly, Mr. Cromwell, but we know each the other's thought.

Cromwell: I believe it. You know nothing of these Scotch agents in London?

Charles: Scotch?

Ireton: They arrived yesterday.

Charles: Who are they?

Cromwell: You do not know, sir?

Charles: I? Indeed no.

Cromwell: I did not suppose it. But already I am beset by warnings. I dismiss them, giving my word in this for your integrity, as it were.

Charles: Minds are strained in these days. It is shameless of them to say this.

Ireton: It means so much, you see, sir. Intrigues with Scotland—there are none, we are assured—but if there were it would almost inevitably bring Civil War again. The mere shadow of that in men's minds is enough indeed to overthrow them. No

man can consider the possibility of that without desolation.

Charles: No. That is unquestionable.

Cromwell: And so I was minded to come, and be sure by word of mouth, so to speak. Your majesty knows how suspicions creep in absence, even of those whom we trust. And I have shown, sir, that I trust you.

Charles: We are not insensitive.

Ireton: It is of that trust, truly worn, sir, that we may all yet look for a happy settlement.

Charles: It is my hope, devoutly.

Cromwell: Parliament bends a little to my persuasion. If I could but induce your majesty to treat no longer directly with them, but to leave all to me.

Charles: It is our Parliament still. We cannot slight them.

Cromwell: But, sir, you confuse things daily. If the army were no longer intact, it would be another matter. But now it is the army that must be satisfied —in the end there is the real authority. Remember, sir, that these men are not merely soldiers. They are the heart and the conscience of the nation in arms. By their arms they have prevailed, how bloodily your majesty knows. They stand now to see that the settlement is not against that conscience that armed them.

Charles: But we must consider ourselves. It would be folly to anger the House.

Cromwell: The House can do nothing without us. And I have considered you, sir. I have persuaded

the army that the monarchy is the aptest form of government for this country. It was difficult, but my belief has prevailed. I have even won respect for your majesty's person. Do but give us our guarantees, and you will mount a securer throne, I think, than any king has yet held in England.

Charles: But Parliament——

Ireton: No, sir. Parliament's demands are not our demands. To give them what they ask will be to lose all opinion in the army. That would be fatal.

Cromwell: Parliament and the army are at one in asking for constitutional safeguards. All are agreed on that. But after that we are in dispute, irreconcilably. They want a Presbyterian despotism. This land, sir, has had enough of despotism, and we will not exchange one despotism for another. We, the army, demand liberty of opinion. We respect law, we stand above all for order and right behaviour, for an observance of the rights of others. But we demand that a man's thought shall be his own, that his faith shall be directed by none. We stand for Bible freedom. And we, sir, are strong enough to make Parliament accept that, but Parliament can never make us accept the tyranny of the Presbyters. We are the new Independents, sir, the Independents of the spirit. We are determined that henceforth in England no man shall suffer for his faith.

Charles: I respect these ambitions.

Ireton: Do but let us go to the army with that respect, and not a trooper but will renew your power for you.

Charles: A power a little cropped, eh, Mr. Ireton?

Cromwell: No, sir, enlarged. You have ruled by interest and fear. You can go back to rule by the affection of a free people. You have the qualities, sir—why waste them?

Charles: You persuade well. Honestly, I am sure.

Cromwell: I could take all. I do not want it. I want to restore your fortune, to give you back a regenerate kingship. Will you take it, sir? It is of love I offer it, love of England, of your great office. And you should adorn that inheritance. Men should be proud to call you king, sir.

Ireton: We have that pride—and we have suffered.

Cromwell: I can disabuse rumour about Scotland. I can persuade Parliament about the presbytery—I can convince the army of your good faith as to tolerance, if you will but give me the word. Let us together make Charles Rex the noblest name of Christendom.

Charles: How shall I stand with the episcopacy?

Cromwell: All tyrannies must go together. We mislike no bishops save that they stand by a tyrannous church. That we will destroy. It is there as I have said. We attack not faiths nor opinions, but despotism. Let a man think as he will, but he shall command no other man to think it.

Ireton: We will not persecute even our persecutors. But they shall stay their hands, now and for ever.

Cromwell: This is just; merciful even. Will you work with us together, sir, to the salvation of our country?

Charles: You are very patient.

Cromwell: To great ends. Why do you deliberate, sir? What invention is needed? All is so plain. And many wish you disaster. If you refuse this, it may be hard to deny them.

Charles: We do not fear disaster.

Cromwell: But I offer you an ascendency undreamt of. It should be plain.

Charles: You offer much, and it should prosper. Or I think so. But I must consider. One has old habits, not easily to be put by. One grows to kingship thus, or thus—the manner does not readily change. But I will consider it.

Cromwell: Time presses.

Charles: Yes, but a day or two. Say three days.

Cromwell: Three days then, sir. I brought your majesty this. (*He takes a miniature from his pouch.*) It is newly drawn by Mr. Cooper. It is of a young man, Andrew Marvell, of whose verses your majesty would think well. He should do much. Cooper has drawn it well—it's very decisive in line, sir?

Charles: Yes; a little heavy there in the nostril, perhaps; but good. Yes, very.

Cromwell: I am told that Van Dyck admires him.

Charles: I have heard him say so.

Cromwell: It's generous of him—the methods are so different.

Charles: Van Dyck draws marvellously in sanguine. (*He takes a drawing from the drawer in front of him and places it before* CROMWELL, *on the case of papers.*) That approaches any of the masters, I think.

Cromwell: Good—yes. And yet Hans Holbein was incomparable—not so assertive—no, copious, and yet as complete, simpler. But—yes, there is great dignity here.

He holds up the drawing in front of him, holding it against the folio case for firmness. CHARLES *makes a movement, but instantly restrains himself.* CROMWELL *is about to replace the drawing and case on the table, when his glance falls on* NEAL'S *paper which is lying in front of him. He sees nothing, but a second glance arrests all his movement. After a moment he turns to look fixedly at the king. There is a silence, then:*

Cromwell: What in the name of God is this (*striking the paper with his hand*)?

Charles: It is private to ourselves.

Cromwell (*rising*): To ourselves? For our private pleasure we will destroy this country, and blast the people in it. Read it, Ireton.

IRETON *takes the paper and rises.*

Charles (*rising*): These are notes for our own contemplation.

Cromwell: Here are ten lines of the bitterest damnation that ever came from the mind of treason. (*Taking the paper again.*) The Scots to invade England. The king's arms to be raised again. Presbytery to . . . Freedom to be destroyed—and diligently, at the king's pleasure. Word blaspheming word as we have spoken. Disastrous man!

Ireton: How far has this gone?

Charles: We are not before our judges.

Cromwell: It will come. This iniquity means we know not what new bitterness of destruction. But know this, Charles Stuart, that when we draw the sword again it is the sword of judgment. Out there many call you the man of blood. I have laboured for you, have met them all in persuasion. I had prevailed. It is finished. Blood is upon us again, blood spilled for a perfidious king. The sword that we had put by for ever. My God, how I have feared it. Well, so be it. We go to the field again—but then, prepare you for the reckoning. It shall be to the uttermost.

Charles: This argument is ended.

Cromwell: All arguments are ended.

He goes with IRETON, *taking the paper.*

THE SCENE CLOSES.

Scene VII.

Cromwell's *house in London. The morning of January 30th, 1649, the day of the king's execution.*

Outside the window can be seen the grey winter gloom, brightened by fallen snow. The room, in which a fire is burning, is empty, and for a time there is silence. Then from a near street comes the soft sound of muffled drums.

Bridget *runs in, and goes to the window, opening it. Then she goes back to the door, and calls.*

Bridget: Mother. (*She goes back to the window.*)

Elizabeth (*coming in*): Yes.

Bridget: It is the king. He is passing down to Whitehall.

Elizabeth: Don't look, child.

Bridget: I can see nothing but the pike-heads. The people seem very still. You can hear nothing but the drums.

A little later Mrs. Cromwell *comes in. She goes to a chair by the fire.*

Mrs. Cromwell: Oliver has just sent from Whitehall for his great-coat. I've sent Seth with it.

Bridget: The king has just passed, grandmother.

Elizabeth: He has gone into Whitehall.

Mrs. Cromwell: Men will pity him. He had no pity.

Bridget: Do you think father is right, grandmother? Saying that it had to be?

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes, I do think so.

Elizabeth: He betrayed his own people. It was that.

Mrs. Cromwell: There could be no safety or hope while he lived.

Bridget: Yes. He betrayed his own people. That's it.

Mrs. Cromwell: Kings must love, too.

Elizabeth: When your father wanted to give him back his throne, a little simple honesty in the king would have saved all. But he could not come to that.

Bridget: The drums have stopped.

Mrs. Cromwell: Is Henry with your father?

Bridget: Yes.

Mrs. Cromwell: What is the time?

Elizabeth: Nearly one o'clock.

Bridget: It must be past one.

Mrs. Cromwell: Oliver will be the foremost man in England.

Bridget: Henry says he could be king.

Elizabeth: That he would never be, I know.

Mrs. Cromwell: He will have to guide all.

Bridget: Don't you wish it could have been done without this, grandmother?

Mrs. Cromwell: When the world labours in anger, child, you cannot name the hour.

Bridget: But Henry thinks it is right, too.

Mrs. Cromwell: If this be wrong, all was wrong.

Bridget: Yes. Thank you, grandmother. That is what I wanted. It was necessary.

Elizabeth: Henry meant to come back before the end, didn't he?

Bridget: He said so.

Mrs. Cromwell: It's very cold.

Bridget: I think it will snow again.

Elizabeth: What are the drums beating again for?

Bridget: Perhaps—I don't know. Will you have another shawl, grandmother?

Mrs. Cromwell: No, thank you.

IRETON *comes in.*

Bridget: Has anything happened?

Ireton: Not yet. In a minute or two. At half-past one. It's three minutes yet.

Bridget: Is father there?

Ireton: Yes.

Elizabeth: Not alone?

Ireton: No. Fairfax and Harrison—five of them.

Mrs. Cromwell: The king—very brave, I suppose?

Ireton: Yes. That was inevitable. We are old campaigners.

Elizabeth: Oliver says that he has been noble since death was certain.

Ireton: Yes.

Bridget: If he had but lived so.

Ireton: He made life ignoble. He would have made it ignoble again, and always. He was a king and he despoiled his people. When that is, kings must perish.

There is a movement and sound of voices in the streets. IRETON *opens the window.* ELIZABETH *and* BRIDGET *stand with him.*

Ireton: Yes. It is done.

MRS. CROMWELL *slowly moves across to the window and stands with the others.*

Mrs. Cromwell: Poor, silly king. Oliver will be here directly. Shut the window, Henry.

IRETON *shuts the window. He,* ELIZABETH, *and* BRIDGET *stand looking out.* MRS. CROMWELL *returns to her seat. All are very still, and there is a long pause. Then, unseen and unheard,* CROMWELL *comes in, moving slowly, his coat and hat still on, his boots carrying snow. He looks at his people, all with their backs to him. He walks across the room, and stands behind his mother, looking into the fire.*

THE SCENE CLOSES.

Scene VIII.

A November night in 1654, *six years later.* Mrs. Cromwell's *bedroom in Whitehall, where* Cromwell *is now installed as Protector.*

Mrs. Cromwell, *now aged ninety-four, is on her death-bed. Standing beside her is* Elizabeth, *ministering to her.*

Elizabeth: Is that comfortable?

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes, my dear, very comfortable.

Elizabeth: Bridget is coming now. I must go down to Cheapside. I must see that man there myself.

Mrs. Cromwell: Very well, my dear. Bridget is a good girl. I may be asleep before you come back. Good night.

Elizabeth (*kissing her*): Good night. (*Softly, at the door*): Bridget.

Bridget (*from the next room*): Yes, mother.

Elizabeth: Can you come? I'm going now.

Bridget: Yes.

She comes in and Elizabeth *goes.*

Bridget: Shall I read, grandmother?

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes, just a little. Mr. Milton was reading to me this afternoon. Your father asked him to come. He has begun a very good poem,

about Eden and the fall of man. He read me some of it. He writes extremely well. I think I should like to hear something by that young Mr. Marvell. He copies them out for me—you'll find them in that book, there. There's one about a garden. Just two stanzas of it. I have marked them.

Bridget (*reading*):

> How vainly men themselves amaze
> To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
> And their incessant labours see
> Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
> Whose short and narrow-vergéd shade
> Does prudently their toils upbraid;
> While all the flowers and trees do close
> To weave the garlands of repose.

And then this one?

> Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less
> Withdraws into its happiness;
> The mind, that ocean where each kind
> Does straight its own resemblance find;
> Yet it creates, transcending these,
> Far other worlds, and other seas;
> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade.

Mrs. Cromwell: Yes. Far other worlds, and other seas. I wish your father would come. I want to go to sleep, and you never know.

Bridget: I think father is coming now.

CROMWELL *comes in. He wears plain civilian clothes.*

Cromwell: Well, mother dear. (*He kisses her.*)

Mrs. Cromwell: I'm glad you have come, my son. Though you are very busy, I'm sure.

Cromwell: Is there anything I can do?

Mrs. Cromwell: No, thank you. What date is this?

Cromwell: The second of November.

Mrs. Cromwell: It's nearly a year since they made you Protector, then.

Cromwell: Yes. I wonder.

Mrs. Cromwell: You need not, son. You were right. There was none other. And you were right not to take a crown.

Cromwell: The monarchy will return. I know that.

Bridget: Why not always a commonwealth like this, father?

Cromwell: Hereafter there shall be a true commonwealth. We have done that for England. But there must be a king. There is no one to follow me. I am an interlude, as it were. But henceforth kings will be for the defence of this realm, not to use it. That has been our work. . It is so, mother?

Mrs. Cromwell: Truly, I think it. It will be a freer land because you have lived in it, my son. Our name may be forgotten, but it does not matter. You serve faithfully. I am proud.

Cromwell: You have been my blessed friend.

Mrs. Cromwell: It was kind of Mr. Milton to come this afternoon. I can't remember whether I thanked him as I should like to.

Cromwell: He likes to come.

Mrs. Cromwell: Be kind to all poets, Oliver. They have been very kind to me. They have the best doctrine.

Cromwell: That is an aim of mine. To find all men of worth and learning and genius. To give them due employment. The Lord speaks through them, I know. I would have none fail or want under my government.

Mrs. Cromwell: I know that. Bridget, girl, be a stay to your father and your mother. They love you. If you should wed again, may you wed well.

Bridget: I will cherish my father's great estate, and I will be humble always.

Mrs. Cromwell: And now, I am tired. Bless you, Oliver, my son. The Lord cause His face to shine upon you, and comfort you in all your adversities, and enable you to do great things for the glory of your most High God, and to be a relief unto His people. My dear son. I leave my heart with you. A good night.

They both kiss her.

Mrs. Cromwell: Is Amos Tanner here?

Bridget: Yes, grandmother.

Mrs. Cromwell: Ask him to sing to me. Very quietly. The song he sang that night at Ely — you remember — when John and Henry were there.

BRIDGET *goes out.*

Mrs. Cromwell: You have been a good son.

Cromwell: Mother, dear.

BRIDGET *returns with* AMOS. *Very quietly he sings.*

When I shall in the churchyard lie,
Poor scholar though I be,
The wheat, the barley, and the rye,
Will better wear for me.

For truly have I ploughed and sown,
And kept my acres clean,
And written on my churchyard stone
This character be seen,

'His flocks, his barns, his gear he made
His daily diligence,
Nor counted all his earnings paid
In pockets-full of pence.'

While he is singing MRS. CROMWELL *falls asleep and he goes.* CROMWELL *stands for a time with* BRIDGET, *watching his mother asleep.*

Cromwell: Daughter, we must be loving, one with another. No man is sure of himself, ever. He can but pray for faith.

Bridget: Father, you have done all that a man might do. You have delivered England.

Cromwell: I have said a word for freedom, a poor, confused word. It was all I could reach to. We are frail, with our passions. We are beset.

He prays at his mother's bedside, BRIDGET *standing beside him.*

'Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do the people some good, and Thee service. And many of them have set too high a value

upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death. But, Lord, however Thou dost dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Give them one heart, and mutual love. Teach those who look too much upon Thy instrument to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short prayer, even for Jesus Christ's sake. And give us a good night if it be Thy pleasure.'

THE SCENE ENDS.

THE END.

Oliver Crom-well

by John Drink-water

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